



# Texas

## Department of Public Safety

March 21, 2012

### **DPS Honors Veteran Assistance Program and Announces Unsung Hero Award**

AUSTIN - During today's Public Safety Commission meeting, five DPS employees were awarded the prestigious Medal of Merit for their roles in the Department Veteran Assistance Program (DVAP), and a Texas 10 Most Wanted analyst was recognized by a state employee group.

"Military personnel continue to be a vital resource for the department, both in our current ranks and in recruiting," said DPS Director Steven C. McCraw. "The DVAP program sends a strong message that military service and experience are valued at DPS and that we understand the challenges that service members and their families have faced. The program also provides practical assistance to the department's reserve and National Guard members deployed and returning from overseas assignments, and assistance to all departmental veterans and their families. I am pleased to recognize the efforts and accomplishments of all award recipients today."

The groundbreaking DVAP program, started in 2008, assists DPS employees and their families during pre-deployment, deployment and post-deployment phases of military activation. The program is now statewide and includes a component for incoming recruits, supervisors, peer support and reintegration. It stresses practical support and understanding the difficulties that the men and women of our armed forces face, while recognizing the vital skill set they bring to the department.

The Medal of Merit winners include:

- Dr. Frances Douglas, Chief Psychologist Austin
- Assistant Chief Timothy Ochsner, Aviation Austin – military veteran
- Captain David Franklin, Criminal Investigations Hurst – military veteran
- Capt. Mike Tacquard, Highway Patrol Austin – military veteran
- Lt. Ed Burris, Aviation Austin – military veteran

Today, the Commission and Director also recognized Victoria Sungino, a crime analyst with the Texas 10 Most Wanted Program. Sungino has been selected as one of the 2012 Unsung Heroes by the Texas Public Employees Association. She was nominated based on her tireless efforts to promote the Texas 10 Most Wanted Fugitive and Sex Offenders programs. In coordination with the Governor's Office, Criminal Investigations Agents, Intelligence and Counter Terrorism personnel, she processes tips that lead to the capture of the state's worst criminals. She will receive her award at an annual ceremony on April 12 in Austin. The Unsung Hero program recognizes state employees whose significant contributions often go unnoticed.

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